

TEACHER'S BILINGUAL LANGUAGE USE IN AN EFL CLASSROOM: STUDENTS' PERCEPTION

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ABSTRACT

Using first language in a second language classroom can be beneficial. This study aims at investigating students' perception about the use of L1 in an EFL classroom setting. The study is framed under case study design in which interview was used as the data collection way. The participants of the study are 10 students from private junior high school in Tajikistan. The results show that the perception of the students is positive. The study suggests that teachers can try different ways of bilingual use in their classrooms based on the purposes the teachers want to achieve.

Keywords: *bilingual language, EFL classroom, students' perception.*

INTRODUCTION

Learning new language in a classroom is difficult for the students when the students do not understand what the teacher is explaining about. That is why an understandable language instruction is very important in learning a new language because if the students do not feel clear enough about what teacher gives or explains to them of the target language. They will not get any kind of information from the teacher during the learning process and hence they might be failed and it will be complicated in the learning process. In Tajikistan context, English is seen as a foreign language (EFL) in which it is not widely used by learners in their immediate social context (Saville-Troike, 2006, p. 4). It includes in the school area when the students learn English as a learning subject.

The condition above also leads to the argument of Brown (2001, p. 98) that teaching students at beginning level is seen as the most challenging level of language instruction, because at this level students only have little or even

do not have prior knowledge of the target language. Besides, Brown (2001) also argues that students are highly dependent on the teacher for models of language. He believes that using the first language (L1) of the students in foreign language classroom is an option, and using first language of the students can help the students to understand in learning English, as long as it can give benefits in English language learning (ELL) to get the target second language (L2).

In addition, Nazary (2008, p. 138) also states that it is common for English Foreign Language teachers to use the students' mother tongue as a tool for conveying meaning as a means of interaction both in English language institutes and in the classroom. Student's native language in an EFL classroom will influence the classroom dynamic and suggestions, because L1 provides a sense of security and validates the learners' live experiences, allowing them to

express themselves (Schweers, 1999, p. 7).

One of the ways to solve situation mentioned above, the use of bilingual approach in English language learning (ELL) classroom in low level English fluency is needed to be investigated. This study would like to investigate the perception of students toward the use of their L1 in ELL classroom and to find out the benefit of using the L1.

LITERATURE REVIEW

English as Foreign Language

English is becoming a global lingua franca, that is why the role of English itself is very diverse. According to Ernandita *et al* (2015) probably in about two and three billion people speak English and only a quarter of it is native or has English as their first language. So the rest is a second language speaker or foreign language speaker. People in the expanding Circle usually do not use English for day to day purposes in a local community, but it is more like to communicate with people across nations and cultures. This global spread of English and its emerging dominant roles have brought challenges in teaching and learning of English.

English as a foreign language is the condition when the speaker has not English as their first language then they learn it for a number of reasons, and don't use English as primary needs or even alternate language. So as seen, this statement is suitable in most learners in Tajikistan as seen English as their Foreign language. English is not just about foreign language that the students just should know, but also should be mastered. Clearly, not simply for the learner to be able to write to a foreign pen friend, to be able to calculate his income tax or understand the information out of the country, though these are all practical by-products of the learning process. But

the teachers bring English in class, are more like to contribute something in society. According to the book "*Teaching English as A Foreign Language*," Broughton *et al* said that "The major areas of the school curriculum are the instruments by which the individual grows into a more secure, more contributory, more total member of society" (Broughton, 2003).

It also has many influences in social and academic contexts. According to Jayanti *et al* role of English itself in a social context is used for academic context, business, entertainment, finance, information, science, research, interpersonal, etc. A lot of particular things are related to English (Ernandita *et al*, 2015).

Perception

Perception is the process of how the information is acquired through the sensory receptors (e.g. eyes, ears, nose, and skin) which is transformed into a perception of what we think, see, hear, smell, taste, or touch (Mussen, 1973). It is in line with the statement of Cherry (n.d) that perception involves human's five senses; there are hear, smell, taste, touch, and sight. Moreover, Kumar (2010) explains the concept of perception in perspective of philosophy, psychology, and the cognitive sciences that "perception is the process of attaining awareness or understanding of sensory information". Furthermore, he also defines that perception is the process of selection, organization, and interpretation of stimuli by someone to be a coherent and meaningful picture of the world. In other words, by passing perceptual process, people can interpret their idea meaningfully based on what they see, hear, taste, smell, and touch.

In addition, Walgito (2001) states that perception which is begun by the process of feeling, of measuring something which is also the process of

accepting stimuli by individuals through sense organs or it is also called sensory process. Besides, she also mentions that perception is defined as an integrated process in every individual to the received stimuli (Mozkowitz and Orgel, 1969; Walgito, 2001; Handini, 2014). Therefore, it can be concluded that perception is the process of stimuli receiving from someone through sensory receptors and producing it to become a meaningful thing either idea or picture of something.

Bilingual Approach in Learning English

Bilingual means that a person is a native speaker of two languages. Others say bilingual means that someone is fluent in two languages. There are also many who say that bilingual means simply to be able to communicate in two languages. In this research the teacher's language use in learning English classroom. It means that the teacher teaches the students by using two languages in the learning processes in order to acquire the target language.

Bilingual approach in this study refers to teacher that uses first language (L1) to learn second language (L2) in the classroom. In this case bilingual meant is using Persian language to learn English subject in the classroom. The teacher uses two languages instruction in the classroom (Persian-English). In this study, it is the application of Persian (L1) and English (L2) in teaching English to the beginner level of students. According to McGroarty (in Celce-Murcia, 2005, p. 345) bilingual approach is applied in the similar group of students where two languages (or more) are used as a language instruction in learning a language subject. Besides, bilingual approach applies two or more language instruction in the classroom.

In addition, the definition of the bilingual approach above is in accordance with the Tajikistan context in which English is existed as a foreign language and where the students study English as a learning subject. In Tajikistan, the term of bilingual approach is commonly known as the use of students' first language (L1) in second or foreign language learning. Both definitions are similar, because whether bilingual approach and L1 use are as similar as the concept of bilingual approach itself.

According to Dujmovi (2007, p. 94-95), there are seven roles of incorporating students' native language in English learning. It could be summarized as follows

1. Preventing time being wasted on tortuous explanations and instructions. Pointing out problem areas of grammar, false cognates, or etc. contrastively.
2. Promoting students' receptive competence (their understanding) by allowing them to respond something using their L1.
3. Allowing the teacher to get know the students as people or making the teacher easy to explain something to the students, especially for beginners in pre-lesson small talk activity during the class in which it affects to decrease students' tense.
4. Helping both students and teacher to say something difficult by rephrasing and simplifying it.
5. Helping students to check their comprehension of lexical explanations by having a bilingual dictionary in the classroom when the teacher does not speak their (students) language.

6. Helpful students who need to combine the two languages, e.g. someone whose job involves translating and interpreting.

Moreover, there are also three roles of students' native language (L1) in English as a foreign language classroom which are argued by Kelilo (2012). There are three roles of L1 in EFL classroom that are stated by Kelilo (2012); it includes pedagogical role, psychological role, and socio-cultural role. Moreover, in psychological role, Kelilo (2012, 27) believes that students' native language (L1) makes students feel comfortable in expressing their thoughts and feel free to do something in class. It also confirms Auerbach's (1993) statement which states that students' native language use in the foreign language classroom reduces the psychological barriers of English learning and gives significant progression (in Kelilo, 2012).

METHOD

This study is framed under case study design in which interviews is used as the way of data collection. There were 10 participants in the study. They are students from a junior high school level of a private school in Tajikistan.

The interview was conducted one on one from which they respondents feel secure and safe to express their ideas and feeling regarding their experiences during the learning process by using bilingual approach. The interview was recorded and then transcribed. In analysing the data, the transcribed data were then coded based on theoretical points of bilingual use in language learning. From the coding results, the data were then analysed and conclusion was arrived at.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings showed that the students' perception is positive in term of the teacher use bilingual language in the classroom. They believe that it gives them some help during their learning as the following list:

Helping them understand the teachers' instruction

During the learning process, the use of L1 in the class made the students grasp the instruction easily. The script below shows it.

"... I understand what to do faster when the teacher translates the instruction" (Student 2)

The script above shows that the students have some problems in understanding the instruction because it was in English. So, the use of bilingual approach in this situation helps the burden of the students.

Creating comfortable environment during the class

During the interview, some students admitted that they felt comfortable because the teacher sometimes used their L1 during the learning processes. This can be prove by the following statement.

"..I am not afraid in English class. I can use my first language sometime if I don't understand.." (Student 5)

The script reveals that the use of L1 in English classroom made the students safe and secure to express their ideas. This is very beneficial for an English classroom from which the students are easily involved mentally and physically in the learning processes.

Adding new vocabularies in English

One of the students said the following statement.

“..because my teacher translate that word... now I know it...” (Student 7)

This shows that the student has no idea about the word before. Because of the translation that the teacher used in the class, it helped the student to acquire a new vocabulary.

In addition, students also mentioned that the use of bilingual approach help them in scaffolding students in completing the tasks, enriching students' pronunciations ability and memorizing and remembering the vocabulary.

In short, bilingual language is necessary to be applied in English classroom. The reasons for this is because students' perception to the use of bilingual language is positive and it is relevant with the theory stated by (Kumar, 2010) that proposed that what they felt, thought, and experienced have some effects on them. It is also supported by Tsukamoto (2011) who tells that there are three reasons for bilingual approach: to maintain a comfortable classroom atmosphere, to promote the students' comprehension and to use the class time efficiently.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that the use of L1 in an English classroom can be beneficial. So, it is expected that this study can be a reference for other future writers who have the same problems and interest in conducting the similar studies. The knowledge about the perception of students toward the use of two languages of instruction can shed some lights for those who are involved in English language teaching or ELT practitioners.

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